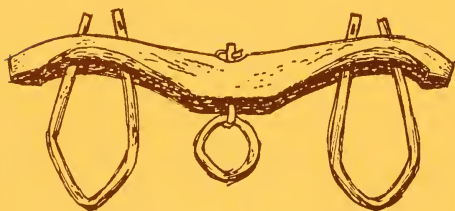


073.7L63
CLF2Ln
East Cape

Farrington, Frank
The nomination of Abraham
Lincoln

LINCOLN ROOM

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
LIBRARY



MEMORIAL

the Class of 1901

founded by


HARLAN HOYT HORNER

and

HENRIETTA CALHOUN HORNER

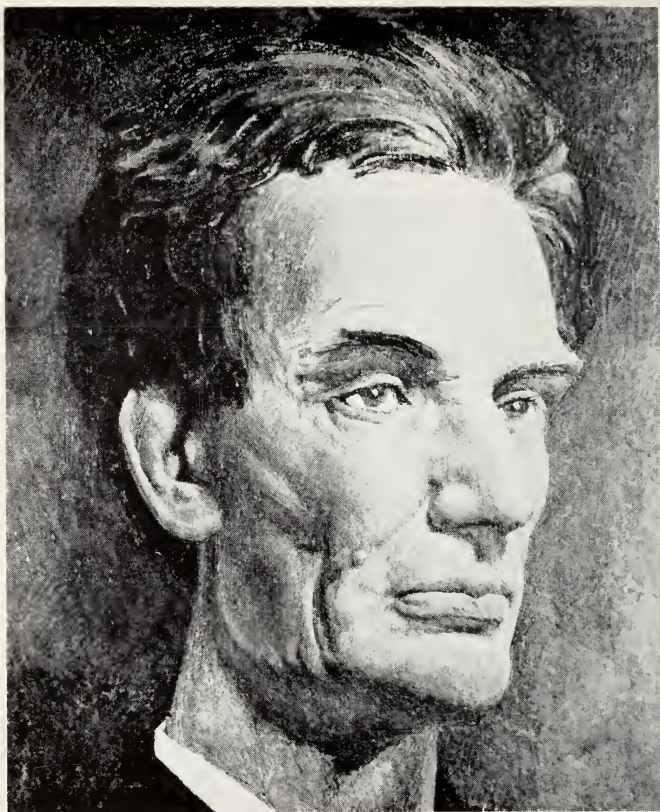
THE NOMINATION
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY
FRANK FARRINGTON



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

THE NOMINATION OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

FROM A PORTRAIT BY TERZI IN POSSESSION OF THE AUTHOR

THE NOMINATION
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY
FRANK FARRINGTON

GREENLAWN PUBLICATIONS
DELHI, N. Y.
MCMXLV

Edition Limited
to 151 Copies
No. 19-----

Frank Farrington

Copyright 1945
by
Frank Farrington

973.7L63
C4F24n

To
THE QUEEN OF GREENLAWN

MR. LINCOLN ACCEPTS THE NOMINATION

Springfield, Ill.,
May 23, 1860.

SIR:

I accept the nomination tendered me by the Convention over which you presided, of which I am formally appraised in a letter of yourself and others acting as a Committee of the Convention for that purpose. The declaration of principles and sentiments which accompanies your letter meets my approval, and it shall be my care not to violate it, or disregard it in any part. Implying the assistance of Divine Providence, and with due regard to the views and feelings of all who were represented in the Convention, to the rights of all the States and Territories and people of the nation, to the inviolability of the Constitution, and the perpetual union, harmony, and prosperity of all, I am most happy to co-operate for the practical success of the principles declared by the Convention. Your obliged friend and fellow-citizen,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Hon. George Ashmun,
President of the Republican Convention.

THE NOMINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

One of the first to urge Abraham Lincoln to consider seriously his candidacy for the Presidency was Jesse W. Fell, a Bloomington, Illinois, politician. Traveling in the east, during the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Fell had found people reading Lincoln's speeches in the newspapers and he came home filled with the idea of promoting him for President. Shortly after his return he met Lincoln one evening on the street in Bloomington, where the latter was attending court. He drew him aside into a vacant office and talked earnestly with him.

"I have been east," said Fell, "and throughout New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, people are talking about you. 'Who is this man,' they ask, 'who is fighting the "Little Giant?"' I have told them Illinois has two giants; that Douglas is the little one but you are the big one. You are getting a widespread reputation through Douglas. I believe, if your position on the slavery question can be brought sufficiently before the people, you can become a formidable if not a successful candidate for the Presidency."

"Oh, Fell," Lincoln replied, "what is the use of talking about me for the Presidency when we have such men as Chase and Seward who are so intimately associated with the principles of the Republican party?"

Fell persisted, however, urging Lincoln to prepare an autobiographical sketch for the public.

Lincoln finally arose to leave, wrapping about his shoulders the old gray shawl so often associated with his tall figure and stovepipe hat. "I admit, Fell," he said, "I am ambitious. I would like to be President. I am not insensible of the compliment you pay me, but there is no such good luck in store for me as the Presidency of these United States. There is nothing in my early history that would interest you or anybody else. It wouldn't pay. Good night."

What is said to be the first definitely pronounced demand in the public press for the nomination of Lincoln for President appeared in the "Cincinnati Gazette" of November 10, 1858. It was a letter signed, "A member of the Fremont convention of '56." This was the first national Republican nominating convention and at that time, Lincoln, on an informal ballot, had received 110 votes for the Vice-Presidency, and 20 votes on the first formal ballot. The letter called for the nomination in 1860 of Abraham Lincoln of Illinois for President and John P. Kennedy of Maryland for Vice-President. The writer, Israel Green, a druggist of Findlay, Hancock county, Ohio, had been aroused by the Lincoln-Douglas debates and he declared Lincoln and Kennedy could sweep the country.

The county conventions of Illinois in the spring of 1860, for the most part endorsed Lincoln. Then came the state convention at Decatur, May 9-10. Lincoln was present, squatting on his heels in an aisle, for want of a better seat, when Governor Oglesby decided the time had come for a coup that originated in his mind.

The governor arose and said, "We have a distinguished guest present, whom Illinois delights to honor. He should be up here on the platform." Amid a tumult of shouts, Lincoln's friends seized upon him and passed him over the heads of the delegates to the platform where he was given a seat.

The governor then announced that an old Democrat was waiting outside to make a contribution to the convention. The door was opened and in marched a one time fellow rail-splitter of Lincoln, old John Hanks, bearing, with some assistance, two weathered fence rails he and the governor had driven out secretly and secured. The rails were decorated with flags and supported a banner inscribed, "Abraham Lincoln, the Rail Candidate for President in 1860. Two Rails from a Lot of 3,000 Made in 1830 by John Hanks and Abe Lincoln—Whose Father Was the First Pioneer of Macon County."

The convention reacted enthusiastically to this dramatic incident. There was the wild applause of a political gathering wrought to its highest pitch, with cries of "Lincoln! Lincoln! Lincoln" and vociferous demands for a speech.

At last Lincoln arose slowly and waited for an opportunity to speak. When the shouting had ceased, he said, referring to the banner, "I suppose I am expected to make some reply to that. The truth is John Hanks and I did make rails in 1830 down in the Sangamon bottom. I don't know whether I made those rails or not, but I am quite certain I made a great many just as good."

The mere appearance of Lincoln and the few words from him caused a demonstration that led George Schneider, a prominent Seward man, to say to a companion, "Seward has lost the Illinois delegation." Schneider was right, for, before the convention adjourned, it adopted a resolution introduced by John M. Palmer, declaring, "Abraham Lincoln is the choice of the Republican party of Illinois for the Presidency and the delegates of this State are instructed to use all honorable means to secure his nomination by the Chicago convention and to vote as a unit for him."

Six days later, May 16, the national Republican convention met at Chicago. It was largely through the foresight of that keen politician, Norman B. Judd, an Illinois member of the National Republican Committee, that Chicago had been chosen as the convention city. None knew better than Judd the advantage to Lincoln in having the convention in his own state and in a city favoring his candidacy. Lincoln himself did not attach much importance to this as an influence, but its wisdom was evident later.

For the event a huge structure had been built, much such a building as the tabernacles built in

more recent years for Billy Sunday. It was 180 feet long and 100 feet wide, and would accomodate 10,000 people. It was the most capacious building in the country at that time. Within was a large gallery and a platform 140 feet long and 35 feet deep, whereon the delegates could sit facing the speakers.

Fifteen railroads had offered rates that brought fully 40,000 people to Chicago, instigated as much by curiosity as by interest in any candidate. These numbers filled the streets where parades marched and countermarched, where band tried to drown out band, while supporters of the candidates filled the air night and day with vocal clamor. Banners, transparencies, music and fireworks transformed the city into one vast carnival.

The convention was to open on Wednesday, May 16. For days the city had been in a state of expectancy. Crowds were pouring in, crowds of interested politicians and friends and supporters of the candidates.

Favorite sons were represented by enthusiastic delegations which paraded the streets in demonstrations for Jacob Collamer, Vermont, William L. Dayton, New Jersey, Nathaniel P. Banks, Massachusetts, Simon Cameron, Pennsylvania, John McLean and Salmon P. Chase, Ohio, Edward Bates, Missouri, and Abe Lincoln, Illinois. But the foremost candidate was Senator William H. Seward of New York, to whom many were prepared to concede the nomination in advance.

The Seward delegation from New York exceeded in numbers all other delegations, save only that

of Illinois. It comprised not less than 2,000 practical boosters, led by Tom Hyer, an ex-prizefighter, and was inspired by the music of Dodsworth's band, an outstanding musical organization of the day. Prominent among Seward's supporters were the eloquent William M. Evarts and the canny Thurlow Weed.

Pennsylvania was scarcely second to New York with 1,500 rooters for Simon Cameron, while New England's 1,000 stalwarts marched from the railroad station to the inspiring music of Gilmore's famous band, dividing their shouts between Seward, Banks and Collamer.

These eastern delegations found themselves in a city where Lincoln banners floated over every street and swung from every public conveyance, where Lincoln's friends had succeeded in bringing together 10,000 men from Illinois and Indiana, joining hands in Chicago, ready to march, shout and even fight for "Honest Abe" if necessary. Lincoln was staying at home in Springfield, having declared he was too much of a candidate to go and not enough of a candidate to stay away.

The Illinois delegation was first to arrive. It was the most aggressive in tactics. It had by far the most followers. It was inspired by a determination to see that no outside delegation made a bigger demonstration than Lincoln's. Its men recognized Seward as the man they had to beat and from the first they centered the fight mainly on his candidacy.

The 22 votes of Illinois were, of course, assured to Lincoln at the outset. As the convention was

organized, there were added to them the 26 votes of Indiana, gained by promising William P. Dole of Indiana the office of commissioner of Indian affairs, and Caleb B. Smith of Indiana a portfolio in Lincoln's cabinet. But these 48 votes did not seem very impressive in the face of the 70 Seward would receive from New York State alone. The total number of votes to be cast was 465, necessary to nominate, 233.

Up and down the Chicago streets the crowds milled, every corner a rostrum for some stump speaker holding forth for his favorite candidate. Whenever Horace Greeley appeared, that vigorous old fighter was hailed by crowds who knew the "New York Tribune," no matter where they lived. "There's old Greeley!" was a cry that never failed to bring men running, certain some kind of an argument would arouse him to a pitch where conversation with one man would become a stump speech to the crowd. On Thursday there were many laughs at Greeley as he went about all day with a Seward badge pinned to his coat-tail.

The fight for the nomination was fully on by Monday, May 14, and Monday's "New York Herald" declared the contest was between Seward, Wade and Lincoln. "The Boston Herald" of the same date stated, "Abe Lincoln is booming up to-night as a compromise candidate and his friends are in high spirits."

Seward's friends claimed 90 votes for him on the first ballot. Lincoln's friends wanted to get 100, but did not know where to get them. One of the

most difficult things with which they had to contend was a determined effort on the part of his opponents to put Lincoln on the ticket in second place. The argument that finally prevailed against this was a statement to the Seward men that there were 40,000 Democrats in Illinois who would support the Republican ticket that fall, but not one of them would vote that ticket if it had on it two old Whigs, such as Seward and Lincoln. (Just before the nominations were finally made, however, Lincoln did telegraph confidentially to a friend from Kansas, Mark W. Delahay, not a delegate, in response to an inquiry from him, that he would accept the Vice-Presidency provided his friends thought he should.

Tuesday saw every candidate's workers uncertain of the outcome and none leaving unturned any stone that might affect the result. The Seward men had planned a great mass meeting for the wigwam, the night before the convention opened, every speaker to be a Seward man. Their clever opponents, however, discovered this plan and were present at the meeting with a plan of their own. They had interested Judge W. D. Kelly, a big, impressive Pennsylvanian, 6 feet, 3 inches tall, personally favoring Wade, and he managed to get the floor early in the evening and he talked against time until nearly midnight, when the audience of 10,000 had dwindled to 1,000.

On the morning of Wednesday, May 16, the convention proper opened, with Hon. George Ashmun of Massachusetts made permanent chairman. On

the convention floor this first day was devoted largely to routine measures and the adoption of the platform. But on Thursday began the real struggle, with such uncertainty as to the choice of candidate that it was felt anything might happen. There was discerned an underlying trend in some quarters toward Lincoln and his opponents urged an early ballot to save themselves from defeat. Their judgment was sound and if they had been able to bring about a ballot on that day, as originally planned, it is probable that Seward would have won. But the Lincoln men knew the situation and fought stubbornly for delay, certain that every hour helped the chances of their candidate.

On Thursday night, however, Greeley's opinion was such that he telegraphed his paper, "My conclusion from all I can gather is that opposition to Governor Seward cannot concentrate on any candidate and he will be nominated."

Early Friday morning Seward's delegates paraded the streets in a wild demonstration for their candidate, their band playing the popular air of the day, "Oh, Isn't He a Darling!" Meanwhile the Lincoln workers were busily engaged in packing the wigwam as far as possible with a great crowd of men and women enlisted to shout and cheer for their candidate. They had combed the city from lake front to prairie edge for stentorian voices. There was one man on the lake front whose voice, it was said, could be heard above the roar of Lake Michigan and on a calm day could be heard across the lake. Out on the Chicago river lived another

man who was said never to have met his equal at shouting. They telegraphed him to come at once. He was a Democrat but he came on the first train. These two men were located within the wigwam on opposite sides and told that whenever Cook, one of the Lincoln workers, took his handkerchief from his pocket, that was the signal for them to begin to shout for Lincoln at the top of their lungs and to keep it up until signaled to stop. Every man and woman was given a flag to wave and told to wave it whenever the name of Lincoln was mentioned. As far as it could be made so, the interior of the wigwam was to be a Lincoln mass meeting, with a similar minded crowd in the streets outside.

When the initial noise and confusion of the meeting had at last subsided, there was comparative quiet as the time came for the nominations. William M. Evarts then arose majestically, was recognized by the chairman and presented the name of William H. Seward in these brief words; "I take the liberty to name as a candidate to be nominated by this convention for the office of President of the United States, William H. Seward."

There was a deafening response from the Seward supporters which appalled the Illinois people not a little. However, the demonstration was even greater when Norman B. Judd's turn came and he tersely presented his candidate, "I desire on behalf of the delegation from Illinois to put in nomination, as a candidate for President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois." With the seconding

of Seward's nomination there came another noisy demonstration and its volume was greater than that of the first for Lincoln. It was then that the Illinois aggregation aroused themselves. And after Caleb B. Smith had seconded the nomination of Lincoln and others had spoken for Seward, Columbus Delano of Ohio announced his second to the nomination of Lincoln as "the man who can split rails and maul Democrats." This set the convention afire. It became evident then that the Illinois "Suckers" and the Indiana "Hoosiers" were determined no hired clique from New York should come into their territory and outshout them. Tom Hyer and his crowd were expected to howl illimitably for Seward at appropriate moments with a hope of stampeding the convention for their man, but in undertaking to outdo the great West of that day at noise making, they were trying to beat the West at its own game and at that the West won magnificently.

As Delano sat down there swept through the great structure such a volume of sound as no mortal had yet heard in a political convention. Men and women climbed on the seats and waved hats, handkerchiefs and flags and yelled without restraint. If New Yorkers had thought Tom Hyer with his bellying voice and his noisy allies could sweep that convention off its feet, the expectation was doomed to disappointment.

The nominations of the minor candidates followed. When these had ended with no appreciable demonstration for any of them, and with an obvious

tendency on the part of the crowd to renew its cheering for Lincoln, Judge Logan, Lincoln's one time partner, almost beside himself with the excitement of the occasion, jumped up and shouted, "Mr. President, in order or out of order, I propose that this convention and audience give three cheers for the man evidently their choice for nominee, Abraham Lincoln!"

Above the wild pandemonium there finally arose a voice, "Abe Lincoln has it by sound; now let's ballot." It was many minutes before the tumult finally ceased and the balloting began.

In an atmosphere of overwrought excitement the first ballot was taken. The climax of all the days of intensive intrigue and of the hours of parade, pageantry and noise, now gave place to the mathematics of votes. The result of the first ballot was finally announced as follows: Seward 173½, Lincoln 102, Cameron 50½, Chase 49, Bates 48, Dayton 14, McLean 12, Collamer 10, Wade 3, Sumner 1, Reed 1, Fremont 1. Total 465, Necessary to nominate, 233.

Lincoln had done better than his supporters expected. Seward's lead was important, but not discouraging. Several of the favorite sons would be unable to hold their delegates and the question was who would get them.

Pennsylvania was indeed the Keystone State and all possible pressure was brought to bear on her delegates, who had cast their first ballot for Cameron as promised and claimed to be under obligation to vote thenceforth for McLean of Ohio.

An intensive concentration upon Pennsylvania began, led by the redoubtable Judge Pettis.

Pennsylvania, as a whole, cared little who became President, provided it gained a satisfactory protective tariff. Cameron had won the lead through a factional fight in the state. In the early hours of Friday in a room in Tremont House, two of Lincoln's and two of Cameron's friends had fought out the question of where Pennsylvania's delegates would go after the first ballot. The argument for Lincoln prevailed.

Lincoln had told his supporters, "I agree with Seward on his 'irrepressible conflict' idea and on negro equality, but I am opposed to his 'higher law' idea. Make no contracts that will bind me." Judge David Davis, however, as chief of the Lincoln workers, gave assurances that if Pennsylvania would support Lincoln and he were elected, Cameron would be made a member of his cabinet. Someone quoted to Davis the Lincoln message to the effect that no bargains should be made binding upon him and Davis replied, "Lincoln ain't here and he don't know what we have to meet, so we'll go ahead just as if we hadn't heard from him and he'll have to ratify it."

Following the first ballot discussion of the Davis promises delayed Pennsylvania for some minutes outside of the wigwam and the second ballot had already begun when those delegates returned. Scarcely had they rushed into the convention hall when the name of their state was called. "Pennsylvania casts her fifty-two votes for Abraham Lin-

coln," responded a voice. The New York delegation sat as though stupefied, as they realized the break had begun that could only mean defeat for their candidate. The ballot was finished and the results announced. Seward still led by a small margin, and at his home in Auburn, New York, with a loaded cannon ready on his front lawn, he confidently announced he would be nominated on the next ballot.

The result of this second ballot was: Seward 184½, Lincoln 181, Cameron 2, Chase 42½, Bates 35, Dayton 10, McLean 8, Cameron 2, Clay 2.

It was then that the approach of the critical moment was sensed and delegates and spectators alike ceased their clamor. From a noise like bedlam there emerged a silence highly charged with suppressed excitement. The only sound was the calling of the roll of states and the staccato response as each gave its vote. This began with Maine and followed westward in geographical order, instead of alphabetically as is the present custom. As the ballot proceeded, a thousand pencils kept the tally. It was quickly seen that Lincoln was gaining. When the roll call had passed New York state with its 70 votes for Seward, the Lincoln count began to pile up until he passed his foremost competitor and took the lead. Before the last territory, Nebraska, had given its vote, split three ways, with but 1 for Lincoln, and the District of Columbia, the last to be called, had cast its two votes for Seward, a whisper went around from the tallying ones that Lincoln

had 231½ votes, lacking only 1½ votes of the needed majority.

It was then, in the hush of the moment, with realization spreading slowly through the wigwam, that a big, impressive, shock-haired figure arose, David K. Cartter, chairman of the Ohio delegation, first to sense the situation and act. He jumped to his feet, gained the attention of the chair and shouted, "Mr. Chairman, I rise to change four votes from Chase to Lincoln!"

Lincoln had his majority.

After all the prolonged struggle of preparation, planning and fighting, however, it took a moment for the result to register on the minds of the delegates. It is said that Horace Greeley realized as quickly as anyone what had happened, and a smile of satisfaction spread over his countenance, not because of the victory of Lincoln, but because of the defeat of Seward and Weed.

Then came realization and the overwrought crowd came to its feet as one man and the tense, deathlike stillness was shattered by the thunder of thousands of cheers, echoing and re-echoing through the wigwam. The great audience was on the brink of mob hysteria. Men pounded one another on the back and grasped the hands of fellow workers. Tears coursed down a thousand cheeks. A myriad of voices shouted as never before. Pandemonium broke loose. Hats, flags, handkerchiefs, canes, were thrown frantically into the air. Everything indicated unbridled joy within the wigwam. "The noise rose and fell like the bil-

lows of the ocean," says a spectator. "Wave after wave of uncontrollable excitement, emotion, sound, swept over the crowd and just as exhaustion seemed to bring it to an end, it would come surging back again in greater volume than ever. The occasion baffled description."

The scene within the wigwam was repeated without. A man stationed on the roof to relay the result to the waiting crowd, bent over the skylight above the stage to learn what had happened. He could not understand anything said to him by a secretary trying to give him word of the result. At last, waving a tally sheet in one hand, the man below managed to make the watcher above hear his words, "Fire the salute. Abe Lincoln is nominated!"

There was one shout from the roof, "Hallelujah! Abe Lincoln is nominated." A cannon boomed to signal the news. A hundred gun salute from the roof of Tremont House, countless lake front and locomotive whistles, the bells in all the steeples, began a wild demonstration that lasted without cessation for twenty-four hours. There was a furor of sound that, as "The Chicago Tribune" declared, "had not been heard on earth since the walls of Jericho fell down." Business houses closed and Chicago went wild over "Honest Old Abe." while Thurlow Weed buried his face in his hands and wept with mortification.

When partial order had been restored inside the convention hall, with many delegates trying to make themselves heard by the chairman, William M.

Evarts shouted above the uproar, "Mr. Chairman, has the vote been declared?"

"No sir," responded the chairman.

This was the signal for a furious rush to get on the band-wagon.

William McCrillis of Maine was heard, "Mr. Chairman, the young giant of the west has become of age. He is twenty-one years old. Maine casts her vote unanimously for Abraham Lincoln." B. Gratz Brown of Missouri shouted, "Mr. Chairman, I am instructed to cast the entire vote of Missouri, eighteen votes for that gallant son of the west, Abraham Lincoln." A. C. Wilder of Kansas came into line to change his territorial vote of 6; "I am authorized by the delegates of Kansas to change her vote to that gallant disciple of the irrepressible conflict, Abraham Lincoln."

Change followed change until, when the vote was finally announced, Lincoln had 364.

William M. Evarts was then heard in a motion, preceded by a short tribute to Seward and ending, "I move that the nomination of Abraham Lincoln as the Republican candidate for the suffrage of the whole country for the office of Chief Magistrate of the American Union be made unanimous."

Amid constant cheers, this motion was seconded by one after another, speaking for different states and interspersing as much oratory as the time permitted.

At last the president of the convention formally announced the choice of Abraham Lincoln and the wild excitement of a short time before was re-

newed. A man appeared in the hall bearing a huge painting of Mr. Lincoln which was swung into view of the excited crowd, and whatever of sanity had been left in that roaring multitude was cast to the winds in unparalleled demonstration.

At half-past one the convention adjourned until five o'clock, when it met again to choose Hannibal Hamlin of Maine as Lincoln's running mate, to transact its closing business and adjourn.

A thousand miles away in the Senate Chamber at Washington, when the result of the convention was announced, a senator leaned across the aisle and asked Stephen A. Douglas, "Who is this man, Lincoln?" "There won't be a tar barrel left in Illinois tonight," was the rejoinder of the "Little Giant."

Back home in Springfield, a tall, ungainly figure, wearing a long, black coat and a stovepipe hat, wandered nervously about from place to place, unable to await the results in stoic calm. In the tenseness of uncertainty and doubt, he dropped into the office of his friend, James C. Conkling, and, throwing himself on a couch, rested and visited a short time, then arose with the comment, "Well, I guess I'll be going back to the practice of law."

In wandering about, he entered a store to make some little purchase requested by his wife. The transaction completed, he came out and stood on the store steps. As he stood there, he heard a shout from the direction of the telegraph office. Out of that office, pell mell, plunged a boy. The waiting crowd turned to follow him across the square. As the boy ran, he caught sight of the tall sober figure

in black in the store entrance. "Mr. Lincoln!" he shouted, "You're nominated!"

Then came the crowd of friends and neighbors, who had known Lincoln for years, some for all their lives; men and women who honored and loved him and sensed his greatness. For a few moments he yielded to the excitement of the occasion. Suddenly he paused and said, "My friends, you will have to excuse me. There is a little woman down on Eighth street who will want to hear this news," and telegram in hand, his coat tails flying, Abraham Lincoln disappeared down the street to find the little woman who for twenty years had declared her husband deserved and would finally receive the honors of the Presidency.

